

RESEARCHERS AT SINGAPORE'S INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES SHARE THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF CURRENT EVENTS

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**Singapore** | 9 Sep 2013

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## **The Evolution of National Security in Indonesia**

*By Bantarto Bandoro\**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- For the first time since its independence in 1945, Indonesia has recently begun publicly to address issues of national security and to identify threats to the nation. This is an apparent consequence of the democratization process in the country.
- In Indonesia, where the concept of national security embraces internal as well as external security, threats to national security have now become more varied and diffused.
- Political tensions are likely to escalate before, during and after the 2014 elections. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono issued a Presidential Instruction earlier this year to tighten security measures ahead of the elections.
- There is concern that the new government taking power in 2014 may lack the competence to handle the security situation effectively. Should it fail on that score, Indonesia risks experiencing domestic turbulence and conflict.

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## INTRODUCTION

Beyond the mere success in managing national problems and in guiding the economy towards further democratization, national security in Indonesia today depends on how comprehensively the government perceives the concept of national security and how it executes the concept.

For starters, it must seek to specify the objectives of national security, the national-regional-local strategic environment, the spectrum of internal threats, and public participation in dealing with such issues.<sup>1</sup>

While national security in Indonesia is defined principally through domestic issues, the country's wider concept of national security also deals with external threats. The Chief of Indonesia's Defense Forces stated on 20 July 2011 that threats to national security have become widespread, and include both internal and external issues. Moreover, the Indonesian Defense White Paper of 2008 noted that the objective of national defense is to counteract traditional as well as non-traditional security threats.

A draft bill on Indonesia's national security<sup>2</sup> was introduced by the government in 2006, which as yet has not been passed by Parliament. The government has in the meantime continued with its efforts to boost public awareness of the importance of this proposed law. The Deputy Minister for Defense, in his public lecture to students of the Indonesian Defense University (2013),<sup>3</sup> reiterated that the draft law was not simply the responsibility of the government, but was one that 'belongs' to the people of Indonesia. He was trying to get various levels of society to understand why the country needs a law on national security.

This paper provides a brief survey of Indonesia's national security concepts during the past six national governments<sup>4</sup>, and identifies the national security issues facing the country, particularly after 2014. The next five years under a new president will be a crucial time for the country.

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*1 Suharto saw national security strictly in terms of threats to the existing regime. See J. Kristiadi, "Keamanan Negara" (State Security), in Bantarto Bandoro (ed) Perspektif Baru Keamanan Nasional (New Perspective of National Security) (Jakarta: Centre For Strategic and International Studies, 2005). In the Indonesian context, security issues have always been the focus of the central government, even during the democratization process, at least in its initial stage. Suharto's New Order saw domestic stability as its first priority. The formula it introduced was that economic development would improve prosperity for all. Thus, the government of Suharto had the sole authority to define what national security issues were, leaving no space for society to participate. This however changed with the inception of reformasi.*

*2 The draft law defines national security as efforts to protect all aspects of national life comprising Indonesia's territorial integrity, theft of natural resources, demographic disturbances, and political, economic and sociocultural sectors of nationhood.*

*3 Wakil Menteri Pertahanan Indonesia, Undang-Undang Keamanan Nasional Milik Bangsa Indonesia (Deputy Defence Minister, Law on National Security Belongs to Indonesian People). Public lecture delivered at Defence University, Jakarta 8 July 2013.*

*4 Public discussions and surveys on the pros and cons of the draft national security bill have been published widely in Indonesia since the introduction of the bill in 2006.*

## NATIONAL SECURITY IN RETROSPECT

National security involves the physical protection of the country, its political independence and territorial integrity, and the economic welfare of the population. Public discussion about national security was unthinkable before the country's transition towards democracy.

The concept of national security is a highly complex one, which is defined differently at different times in a country's history. Under President Sukarno, national security seemed to focus on expelling elements of colonialism and imperialism from the country and the region. Sukarno was anti-colonial in his personal as well as his policy outlook, and he took a strong position that Indonesia's independence was directly threatened by foreign powers. Thus, national security during his administration mobilized domestic resources towards complete independence from the outside world, even at the expense of economic growth.

In contrast, the New Order regime under General Suharto perceived the major threat to national security as arising from within the country. In seeking economic development and political stability, his policy measures aimed at strengthening the country's foreign relations in order to secure external resources.<sup>5</sup> At the regional level, Suharto's concept of national security saw him seeking a stable regional environment as a prerequisite for resolving internal problems. In 1975, the concept of national resilience was introduced to express the comprehensiveness of this notion of national security.<sup>6</sup>

Suharto's successors—from Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono—have tended to perceive national security as the maintaining of territorial integrity.<sup>7</sup> Habibie also seemed to follow his predecessor's thinking that political stability and overall national development were key to national security, although this cannot be confidently stated since his term in office was a short one. His major concern may have been the release of East Timor from Indonesian control, and many were indeed worried that other separatist-minded regions would try to follow suit.

The salient characteristic of the presidency after Abdurrahman Wahid assumed power in 1999 was the government's openness to non-state actors—civil society organizations—in foreign policy making. However, his rash handling of national issues not only led to his downfall, but also led to a belief that his government did not prioritize national security. When Megawati Sukarno Putri replaced Wahid in 2002,

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<sup>5</sup> Bantarto Bando, "Indonesian foreign policy under Suharto", Public lecture delivered at Parahyangan Catholic University, May 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See Gary Hansen, "Indonesia in 1975: National Resilience and the Continuity of the New Order Struggle," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 16, No 2, Feb 1976.

<sup>7</sup> The maintaining of territorial integrity came into the picture and continued to be a key policy reference as concerns about possible disintegration grew with as the country embarked on the policy of decentralization.

it was not at all clear whether national security figured at all in her government. Many at that time even doubted that she had the capacity needed to run the government. In addition, her government failed to convince the public that it could bring the country out of the deep crisis it had experienced since late 1998.<sup>8</sup>

The crucial security issues she faced were the Bali bombing, sectarian conflicts in Maluku and Poso and the rebelliousness of the province of Aceh. Megawati's government received praise for a national law on combating terrorism.

Megawati's successor, Yudhoyono, went much further in addressing the spectrum of challenges to national security. It was during his two terms in office that various documents directly related to national security were published.<sup>9</sup> With the issuance of several regulations on, or related to, national security—particularly the draft law on national security—the government of Yudhoyono has attempted to address national security comprehensively.

Many would agree that improvements in the country's economic and political situation under the Yudhoyono government have been significant. However, Indonesia still continues to face tremendous security challenges: secessionism in Papua, communal conflicts in general, the continuing threat of terrorism, and political conflict resulting from local elections. An array of non-traditional security problems—such as the haze and piracy—remain high on the government's agenda.

The above examination of how national security issues have been perceived by the six national governments reflects substantial differences not only in the handling of salient issues, but also the degree of alertness on national security.

What is lacking from the six national governments discussed above is the formulation of what can be termed as a 'national security threat list'. Such a list can, for example, specify categories of activities that are national security concerns regardless of the sources and who the agents are.

## THE 2014 ELECTIONS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

How successive leaders have understood national security has to a certain extent been shaped by the difference in the issues they each encountered. Different imperatives had prompted them to act in different ways.

Although the next election is still a year away, Indonesia is already rife with speculation on who will lead the country after ten years with President Yudhoyono, and how national security will be understood by the new president. For now, one has to

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<sup>8</sup> Bantarto Bandoro, "Putting humpty back together again," *The Jakarta Post*, 18 December 2001

<sup>9</sup> The main ones are Law on TNI, No. 34/2004; Law on State Defence No 2/ 2002; and the 2006 Draft Bill on National Security. Law on TNI No 34/2004 served as the basis for the management of the Indonesian National Army, including the prohibition of TNI members' involvement in politics and business as stated in article 39 paragraphs 1 and 2. Law No. 2/2002 on State Defence regulates the core values, purpose and principles of national defence. As for the Draft Bill on National Security, see footnote 2

wonder how the presidential candidates will frame national security in their political programmes. These programmes are a minimum indicator of their sensitivity to national security issues.

Whatever the case, there will be a need to take security precautions as political tension is likely to escalate ahead, during and after the general elections. Massive, sometimes uncontrolled, rallies and campaigns will mark the period. It is during this time that clashes of ideas may drive more fanatic supporters of candidates and parties to physical violence.

President Yudhoyono warned earlier this year that competition would be very tight in the presidential election in 2014. This election will be different from the ones in 2004 and 2009 because the incumbent is not allowed to run. The competition is also expected to be broader and fiercer than before, and this may produce dangerous situations at national and provincial levels. In anticipation of “national security turbulence”, the President issued Presidential Instruction No. 2/2013 to tighten security. The new regulation proposes cooperative mechanisms between civic authorities (central and local government) and security authorities (Police, TNI, etc.) to respond to and resolve problems of domestic security disturbance. The term “domestic security disturbance” in the regulation refers to all forms of violence caused by social conflict or terrorism.

The political situation before, during and after the 2014 elections will be a testing time for the country. It will have implications for social stability, territorial integrity, external relations, cultural cohesion, and governance. Security risks resulting from the election process call for broad security measures to be taken<sup>10</sup>. And in the end, the new government will need to identify security issues accurately and be effective in addressing them.

## CONCLUSION

The Yudhoyono government was not only successful in dealing with the issue of separatism in Aceh, but was also making great effort to combat terrorism and deal with the financial crisis and other non-traditional security threats. How the post-Yudhoyono government will view national security is hard to foresee.

The new president cannot rely too strongly on security achievements of the Yudhoyono government. The noisy extremism which may lead to violence, the communal conflicts which continue to haunt the country and the threat of terrorism are just some of the threats to national security that need to be focused on.

What is perhaps even more important for the next president of Indonesia to do is to demonstrate his or her commitment to democracy, political stability and economic

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*10 Such measures are emphasized by the Chief of the Indonesian National Police, General Timur Pradopo.*

growth. He or she will need to emphasize the importance of the external dimension of the country's national security. As warned by the Chief of Indonesia's National Defense Force, external threats are not easily distinguishable from internal ones. Should the next government fail to maintain national security, Indonesia risks sliding into domestic turbulence and conflict.

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**ISEAS Perspective** is published electronically by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

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